



Employment for Persons with a Disability: Analysis of Trends During the COVID-19 Pandemic

SUMMARY

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been unprecedented changes in employment for America's workforce. Many businesses ceased or scaled back operations and many state governments issued stay-at-home orders. Using key labor force statistics from the Census Bureau's [Current Population Survey](#) (CPS) researchers with the Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy sought to provide insight into the recent changes. This brief explores two key aspects of occupations and industries that were associated with employment outcomes for people with and without a disability since February 2020 (prior to the impact of COVID-19):

- Whether it was possible to perform the job at home (i.e., telework)
- Whether the job required workers to be in close proximity with others (i.e., contact intensity)

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The **unemployment rate for people with a disability more than doubled** from 7.8 percent in January 2020 to 18.9 percent in April 2020. The unemployment rate for this population declined to 14.3 percent in July 2020.
- The **unemployment rate for people without a disability more than tripled** from 3.8 percent in January 2020 to 14.3 percent in April 2020. The unemployment rate for this population declined to 10.3 percent in July 2020.
- **Workers with a disability in service occupations accounted for the largest share of the total decline in employment**, representing 33.9 percent of the decline from February 2020 to July 2020
- **Approximately 30 percent of the workforce was employed in jobs assumed to have high telework opportunities in February 2020**, while 28 percent were employed in jobs assumed to have some telework opportunities, and 42 percent in jobs assumed to allow limited telework.
- **Workers with and without a disability in occupations with limited telework opportunities experience the greatest percentage decline in employment** from February 2020 to July 2020. There was a 15.1 percent decline in employment for workers with a disability in occupations with limited telework opportunities and a 12.3 percent decline for workers without a disability.

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